

Book Review

Sexually Transmitted Diseases. R. C. Noble, 1979. Pp. 158 and index. Henry Kimpton, London (£6.00)

The author, who is an associate professor at the University of Kentucky, has written this book for physicians, house staff, and clinic personnel. It is a convenient size and shape for carrying in the pocket of a clinic coat and could be used for reference at work. Since the book is written from an American viewpoint, a review written by a British doctor, who is unfamiliar with the normal clinic management in America, may possibly be overcritical. I am sure that it would succeed in its objective in America, but as treatment schedules in America and Britain differ—particularly for gonorrhoea and syphilis—its place in British venereology is less assured. However, there are some excellent chapters in the book and I would suggest that it might be read with profit by venereologists in this country.

The opening chapter on patient management is one such chapter. Useful tables of differential diagnoses are given, and a section is contributed by a lady physician on the 'consumer viewpoint' in pelvic examinations. The author uses a precise style of prose, almost like lecture notes, which has the virtue of imparting information concisely.

The chapter on gonococcal infections covers the entire spectrum of diseases caused by the gonococcus. Disseminated gonococcal infection is almost over

emphasised, but there is no mention of blood cultures or of the gonococcal complement fixation test in this condition. In the section on diagnosis the modified Thayer-Martin medium is stressed as the ideal culture medium, but there is no mention of Stuart's or Amies's transport media. Urethral cultures from female patients are only recommended after hysterectomy, rectal cultures are taken blind in both men and women, and proctoscopy is not performed routinely on male homosexuals. In the section on treatment, there is no mention of the Lomholt and Olsen regimen using benzyl penicillin and probenecid, presumably as the only therapeutic regimens recommended are those suggested by the Center for Disease Control. The number of post-treatment follow-up visits recommended is fewer than in British clinics. One can only assume that two-glass urine tests are not performed in America.

The chapter on syphilis is again very thorough and there are clear instructions on the techniques for obtaining specimens for darkground examinations from chancres and lymph nodes. Serological tests are clearly explained. The author is a firm believer in epidemiological treatment for both syphilis and gonorrhoea, although few venereologists in this country would use the treatments recommended. The problems of syphilis in pregnancy and congenital syphilis are discussed. Although congenital syphilitic deafness is mentioned, its treatment with steroids is not.

The other chapters in the book are shorter but deal with the other sexually transmitted diseases individually in great detail. Topics not commonly dealt with in British textbooks are *Corynebacterium vaginale* vaginitis and the 'gay-bowel' syndrome, both of which chapters are worth reading. The chapter on pediculosis deals with all forms of louse infestation. The pharmacology of metronidazole is very thoroughly described, but its use in the first trimester of pregnancy is not recommended; whether the alternative (a weak vinegar douche) would be acceptable in Britain is debatable. The chapter on herpes simplex is also worth reading.

The author states in the preface that he deliberately omitted Reiter's syndrome and Behçet's syndrome. Another omission is balanitis xerotica obliterans.

The one serious flaw in the book is the illustrations. These are too small, unbalanced in selection (there are seven of the skin rash in disseminated gonococcal infection but only three in the chapter on syphilis), and some plates simply lack the contrast necessary to clarify the relevant points in monochrome plates. Hopefully the users of the book would work in busy departments with adequate clinical material to remedy this.

References are provided for each chapter from both American and British journals to encourage further reading.

G. D. Morrison